

PROCIB-D-36

29 August 1960

Mr. William McAfee  
Interdepartmental Coordinator for  
Foreign Publications  
Department of State  
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Bill,

The Committee on Procurement of Foreign Publications of the United States Intelligence Board (PROCIB) has for several months indicated increasing concern over the failure of the Publications Procurement Program to secure adequate publications coverage from Latin America. The extremely volatile nature of the situation in many countries of that area; the recent and forthcoming elections in several of the countries, all of which have a bearing on hemispheric relations and security; the stepped-up Soviet and Chinese Communist drives to penetrate and subvert, and to gain domination of the peoples and economies of many Latin American countries, all serve to highlight the importance of acquiring publications. In this connection, the difficulties encountered by the three National Libraries and other strong Latin American collections in this country are of concern to us, since we must draw upon the total available resources in meeting the information needs of the Intelligence Community.

Because it was desired to have a firsthand impression of the scope of books and periodicals available throughout Latin America, a survey team visited nine countries in the area in early 1960. They found and brought back with them several hundred publications of interest to the Intelligence Community, and their report on the availability of publications in Latin America has been made available to all PROCIB members. In their report, these officers stress the unique

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situation in the Latin American booktrade, as booksellers in that area do not render the service to customers which characterizes American and European bookstores. Latin American booksellers tend to disregard orders for books or give extremely slow service. With very few exceptions, neither booksellers nor publishers produce lists of available publications from which adequate selection can be made. Such lists as are produced are spasmodic and usually die after a few issues. Very few Latin American countries produce national bibliographies, and where such do exist, they are several years in arrears. The amorphous state of book distribution in certain Latin American countries has been confirmed by an entirely separate report by Dr. Nettie Lee Benson, Head of the Latin American Collection of the University of Texas.

In view of these factors, PROCIB has concluded that the only way in which the Publications Procurement job can be satisfactorily performed is to have a full time Regional Publications Officer in Latin America with adequate travel funds. Such an officer would be in a position to know the best bookstores in the various countries and would be able to visit them periodically, for only by personal contacts and personal acquisitions can adequate procurement be accomplished. He must be in a position to cover the many important Communist and other left-wing outlets in the area. This view is reinforced by the experience of the Library of Congress and several major university libraries. A Regional Publications Procurement Officer must be able to advise on and coordinate the activities of the Ad Hoc Publications Procurement Officers in all of the Embassies throughout the area. He should have had intelligence experience, and should be widely acquainted throughout the Intelligence Community. He should have close to native fluency in Spanish.

At its meeting on 23 August 1960, PROCIB formally concluded that the needs of the Intelligence Community could no longer be adequately served in the field of Latin American Publications unless and until a full time Regional Publications Procurement Officer was appointed for the area, and they have endorsed the sending of this memorandum to urge you to take all possible steps within the Department of State to establish such a position as soon as possible, and in no event later than the beginning of Fiscal Year 1962. Adequate travel funds must also be available, for periodic travel throughout the area is essential.

As you know, PROCIB membership consists of representatives of the Departments and Agencies which comprise the United States Intelligence Board.

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In addition, associate membership on PROCIB is held by the Department of Agriculture, the Library of Congress, the United States Information Agency, the National Science Foundation, and the National Library of Medicine.

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Chairman, Committee on Procurement  
of  
Foreign Publications